

SUPERINTENDENTS ON COURSE

Our 1988 survey results tell us what we've known all along.
Today's supers are exactly that.

by Will Perry, managing editor

“We can deal with the weather. We can take care of the turf and the weeds on our course. It's the people we're having trouble dealing with.”

That's the synopsis gathered from *Landscape Management's* year-end survey of America's golf course superintendents. And the people they're concerned about? For many it's their customers—the golfers. For others, it's their personnel—both full and part time, who seem as willing to change jobs as they are their shoes.

Almost 40 percent of our respond-

ents cited the hack golfer and/or low level crew personnel as their primary nemesis. “There are too many poorly educated golfers out there who haven't been properly instructed in the area of course etiquette,” says a veteran Oregon superintendent in his second season at a public course.

“Trying to get players to keep their carts off the fairways” is my biggest problem, responded another, adding that he's frustrated trying to “educate players about the use of disposable containers on the course. They're totally inconsiderate of property.”

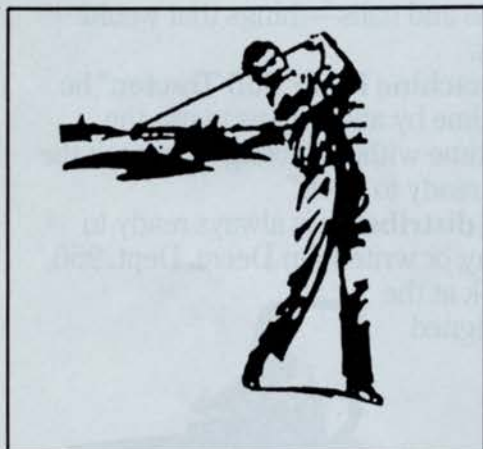
For most respondents complaining of difficulties arising from golfers, this lack of etiquette means ball mark and divot control, a general inconsideration of course property and improper golf cart use, which one super described as “our biggest source of revenue and our biggest source of problems.” For others, the problem lies in the golfers' expectations. “Too much is expected by golfers,” says an Illinois superintendent who has been at it for 10 years. His course, which is privately owned and has restricted membership, manages 18 holes on an annual budget of about \$520,000.

Employee management, particularly motivation, cropped up as a primary concern. In parts of the country where unemployment levels are low, supers are finding it difficult to attract quality lower-level employees. “We have 3½ percent unemployment in our area,” says the super of a private course in New Jersey, adding, “Big money is almost not a factor” when trying to attract employees.

Another major concern of supers is their annual budgets, which many feel don't grow in proportion to the type of course greens committees anticipate.

A Michigan superintendent cited his biggest problem as “Trying to produce a course comparable to those

Landscape Management Survey Averages



Length a superintendent 11.25 years

Length at current course 6.9 years

Geographical distribution

Northeast 20%

Southeast 13%

Midwest 48%

Southwest 8%

Plains/Mountains 6%

Far West 5%

Type of course

Public 18.8%

Private 29.2%

Restricted membership 37.5%

Resort 16.7%

Number of holes

Nine 16%

Eighteen 73%

Twenty-seven 9%

Thirty-six 1%

More than 36 1%

Average number of rounds per week

Spring 1,454

Summer 2,122

Winter 1,545

Fall 827

Average maintenance budget

1987 \$254,334

1988 \$297,120

Anticipated 1989 \$334,114

Average Crew Size

Full time 7.25

Part time 5.83

seen on television with a budget that is not large enough to deal with 45 acres of bentgrass fairways." The 1989 budget on his 18-hole private course is \$200,000, up from \$180,000 in 1988.

Several supers cited the lack of available monies to improve irrigation and meet the rising costs of equipment and personnel as a problem. Said one: "Working on a private membership course, it is hard to get the money needed to improve equipment and irrigation. They [owners] are satisfied with what they have and won't attempt to grow and improve."

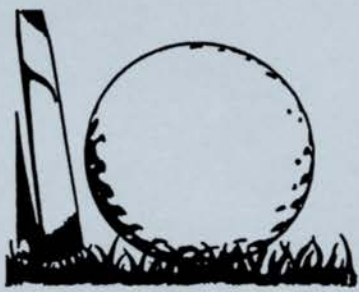
Budgets are growing

Though comparing golf course budgets is essentially a meaningless task, it is encouraging to note that survey results showed a steady increase in course budgets since 1987. At that time, supers reported working with budgets around \$255,000. In 1989, that range will fall in the area of \$335,000, up from \$297,000 in 1988.

And what will supers be doing with the extra dough? Many (68%) said they're planning on improving their irrigation systems. Not surpris-

Problem Diseases of Golf Turf

Dollar Spot	63%
Brown Patch	56%
Snow Mold	35%
Leaf Spot	38%
Pythium	54%
Others	17%



ing since 34% said they're using older quick-coupler or automatic systems with limited controls.

In general, supers reported their budgets for fertilizers, herbicides and fungicides have steadily increased in recent years, while insecticide budgets have grown at a slower clip. Sixty-four percent reported an increased fertilizer budget in 1989, compared to 28% who cited no increase. An anticipated increase in herbicide expenditures in 1989 was reported by 57% of the respondents and 69% said the same of their fungicide budget. Fifty-five percent reported no change in their anticipated 1989 expenditure for insecticides.

The major turf weed problems these supers face are dandelions (30%), crabgrass (30%) and clover (27%), which they fight with \$8,113 worth of herbicides. As far as insects are concerned, grubs were the major problem (33%), followed by sod webworms (17%) and armyworms (10%). Chinch bugs, mole crickets and nematodes were also cited as problem insects. The respondents reported an annual insecticide budget of \$4,915.

As for who supers will look toward when they're deciding where to spend that money? It appears they'll be looking at each other. When rating buying influences, nearly all of the responding supers rated other supers as either very important (49%) or important (46%) as a buying influence. Association information also ranked well, followed by distributor advice, magazine articles and extension agents.

There are a few noticeable trends that emerge when one pours over these survey results. One is that supers are being asked to do more than ever before. Their responsibilities are growing with the ranks of golfers. Also, the management of turf areas alone is no longer enough. The best supers need to be effective as a "people-manager", also. **LM**

1989 Budgets on the Rise

